STAFF REPORT

TO: Public Safety Council **DATE:** April 4, 2006

COPIES TO: City Council

VIA: Gary Jackson, City Manager

FROM: Anthony Butzek, PE, PTOE
City Traffic Engineer

SUBJECT: Traffic Calming Summary

SUMMARY STATEMENT: Information pertaining to completed (last 3 years) and active projects in the City's Traffic Calming program.

The City has been actively involved in the installation of traffic calming since the neighborhood traffic calming policy was adopted in February 2000. Projects have been completed using City funds and using funds required of private developers. Projects completed to date include South French Broad Avenue, Gracelyn Road, Ottari Road, Florida Avenue, Dorchester Avenue, Caribou Road, Wyoming Road, Murdock Avenue, Ridgelawn Road, Wellington Street, Beechwood Road, Crockett Avenue, Oak Ridge Road, Fernlawn Road. Projects are in development for Kenilworth Road, London Road, West Chapel Road, Brooklyn Road, Wyatt Street, Edwin Place, Kimberly Avenue, Country Club Road, Macon Avenue, Club View Road, Edgemont Road, Evelyn Place, and Grovewood Road. The Biltmore Park neighborhood is developing their own project for streets in their neighborhood.

Other street features have been installed citywide to improve traffic and pedestrian safety, such as the roundabout and median on College Street and refuge islands on Lodge Street, Montford Avenue, and Woodfin Street. These are not part of the neighborhood traffic calming program, but incorporate traffic calming features in their design.

EFFECT ON TRAFFIC:
Traffic calming has been proven around the country and in Asheville to effectively control the prevailing speeds of traffic. Based on the follow-up studies done for several Asheville projects, we see that the 85% speeds at the measures were reduced from an aggregate average 34.6 mph to 27.7 mph. The speed limit on all streets studied was 20 or 25 mph. Where traffic volumes were compared, a reduction of 8.9% was observed. From this, I would conclude that our traffic calming efforts have had a significant reduction of speeds and have a minor impact on traffic volumes in some cases. Information on crash reduction has not been studied, and would not be expected to yield conclusive results due to the small sample size of streets and crashes.

EFFECT ON POLICE ENFORCEMENT:
Traffic calming drastically reduces the need for police enforcement. Murdock Avenue is a case in point: calls for traffic-related problems and enforcement have declined by 76%, from 90 calls in the

one-year period preceding the construction to 22 calls in the one-year period following construction. This is attributed primarily to the installation of traffic calming. APD estimates a savings of 100 man-hours on this street for this one year, allowing them to spend the time focusing on other issues.

VEHICLE DAMAGE:

The City receives few claims for damage related to our neighborhood traffic calming program. Most of the claims received are from drivers who have hit bulb-outs (bulb-outs are defined as projections of the curb, and are typically installed for reasons other than traffic calming, including increasing sidewalk width, shortening crosswalks, to protect on-street parking spaces, and to allow space for plantings). We are also aware of drivers having hit traffic islands due to the damage to the islands (repaired at City expense), but these drivers have not filed claims. Intoxicated drivers are known to be responsible for some of the strikes. Our response to these strikes has been to improve signage and marking, add reflectors to make them more visible at night, and to keep construction sites properly barricaded until signs and/or markings are in place. It seems that some drivers will hit the obstructions no matter what we do, but these measures reduce the likelihood. The likelihood of strikes diminishes almost completely once the measures have been in place a few months.

STAFF EFFORTS:

Despite considerable time invested in involving the public in the development and implementation of projects, traffic calming remains very controversial. Vocal discontent is evident in many aspects of traffic calming, including the overall philosophy of impeding traffic, the effects on emergency response, specific design details, islands versus humps, and the specific locating of measures, to name a few. Residents are often discontent with minor aspects of the design. Despite this, there remains a large demand for traffic calming from residents.

Due to the unique nature of traffic calming, projects require a large investment of staff time, throughout the process, and after construction. I spend more time dealing with the controversies and disagreements of traffic calming than the same for any other aspect of my responsibilities.

EFFECT ON OTHER CITY SERVICES:

Maintaining the traffic calming measures does have a cost, although relatively minor, that is supported by Public Works. Traffic calming measures slow traffic, including fire and emergency response vehicles.

PROS AND CONS:

Pros of traffic calming

Speeding is reduced
Need for enforcement is reduced
Quality of life is improved for residents of streets
Can include aesthetic enhancements to support community
Requested by many residents
Improves safety

Cons

Costs for installation

Costs of maintenance
Opposition to measures by some
Requires large amount of staff time

CONSISTENCY WITH GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:
Traffic calming supports an efficient transportation system by managing traffic demand in neighborhoods.

RECOMMENDATION: For discussion purposes.